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CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT MARTYRDOM IN ENGLAND: REPRESENTATIONS OF ENGLAND AS ISRAEL C.1530-1600

Abstract:

I am a final year PhD student at the University of East Anglia, due to graduate in July after successfully completing my Viva. My thesis, supervised by Doctors Silvia Evangelisti and Jessica Sharkey, provides the first in-depth comparison between Tudor-era Catholic and Protestant martyrs in England since the research of Patrick McGrath, Jack Scarisbrick and Arthur Dickens during the 1960s. Convinced they were living in the end-times, Catholics and Protestants alike strove to portray their own religious group as the elect. This was defined in traditional martyrologies as the uncorrupted successor to the early church or, especially among radical Puritans, ancient Israel. Henrician and Elizabethan Anglicans in particular strove to create a brand of universal, independent Catholicism distinct from continental Protestant heresy; and pre-Reformation Popery that allegedly advocated the worship of dead saints, and the Pope himself, rather than Jesus.

At this conference, I intend to discuss the evolving representation of the English Protestant elect, as propagandists writing after the Marian persecutions sought to prove the restored Church of England's legitimacy and exclusivity. Fearing Catholic allegations of plagiarism, and eager to discredit the veneration of pre-Reformation saints as idolatrous, Elizabethan Puritans such as Foxe actively identified the Elizabethan confessional state with ancient Israel, in the belief that a religious group's superiority was determined by its ancient lineage. The following article will serve as the basis for a more in-depth piece of future research, where I will analyse the evolution of English Puritan attitudes towards contemporary Jews during the 17th-century. Furthermore, I will analyse the Catholic response, where Counter-Reformation Jesuits used depictions that would (by modern standards) be considered anti-Semitic, to equate English Protestants with the Jews who allegedly killed Christ; and lost God's patronage due to their reputed wickedness and stubbornness. Such depictions were useful for reasserting the priesthood's claim of superiority, by arguing that, like the saints of the New Testament, Jesuits took it upon themselves to correct Old Testament errors unwittingly restored by the post-schism Anglican confessional state.

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Introduction

The first part of this article will contextualise the Catholic and early Protestant portrayal of martyrs as saints, and the remainder will focus upon Anglican and Puritan efforts to set themselves apart as the divinely favoured successors to Israel. My own position is that the notion of an elect represented neither rigid continuity, nor a total break with the past, but adaptation of existing beliefs, to demonstrate to readers that Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism remained relevant in a time of transition and persecution. The educated men who recorded the lives of martyrs, known as martyrologists, were usually priests or ministers who took it upon themselves to honour the sacrifices of their forebears in order to both undermine rival sects; and inspire the younger generation of recusants, Anglicans or Puritans to live pious lives. Catholic, Anglican and Puritan martyrologists reinterpreted earlier models of martyrdom when these suited their agenda, although, as Alexandra Walsham's research on underground preachers suggests, Protestant accounts were generally more flexible. (Walsham, 2000, p.121) Besides Protestant efforts to supplant sainthood with older, allegedly superior, models of martyrdom, I will also analyse the evolving Catholic response to allegations of pagan idolatry. Seeking to highlight the continued relevance of New Testament based Mass, priests adapted negative Jewish stereotypes not only to brand Elizabethan England wicked and godforsaken; but also to exalt martyred missionaries as successors to the original saints correcting the Old Testament errors unwittingly restored by Elizabeth's late father and brother.

From Sainthood to the Elect

Concurrent with the research of Eamonn Duffy, my preliminary reading suggests Catholics and early Protestants initially drew heavily upon the models of pre-Reformation sainthood. (Duffy, 2005, p.23.) For Catholics, the aim was to establish continuity with the medieval church and emphasise its infallibility, in contrast to the Protestantism they deemed divisive, disorderly and contradictory. (Parsons, 1688, p.218) Both Marian propagandists like London artisan Miles Huggard, and exiled Elizabethan missionary-priests like Cardinal William Allen, Jesuit Robert Parsons, and George Keynes, attacked Anglican Protestantism for lacking ancient origins, and contrasted the patient endurance of early Christian martyrs with the insolence of recently burned Henrician or Marian heretics. (Huggard, 1556, p.102) With hindsight, Catholics nostalgic for the Marian era strove to depict recently burned heretics as traitors to God and country for disobeying the orders of the Queen and infallible Pope to re-join the ancient Catholic Church founded by Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul. (Almond, 1623, p.3) Besides possessing the alleged ability to heal physical and mental sickness through the power of prayer, priests were also allegedly able to perform everyday miracles, including consecration, and the magical transformation of communion bread and wine into Christ's body and blood. The apparent lack of miracles within the Elizabethan Anglican Church was used by Catholic priests ordained post-1558 to exalt contemporary "holy worthies" (Keynes, 1627, p.2) as superior to Protestant ministers, due to priests' alleged ability to transmit messages through prayers to God, the Virgin Mary, and other saints. (Wilson, 1608, p.2)

Drawing upon Alexandra Walsham's research on post-Reformation reinterpretations of the religious landscape and sacred space, my analysis suggests that Protestant martyrologists frequently adapted and reinterpreted older pre-Reformation models in response to Catholic allegations of plagiarism. (Walsham, 2011, p.566) Although

many older Protestants continued to view the saints as virtuous role models, their rejection of priests' supposed abuse of rituals as idolatrous shaped later Puritan suspicion over images; and promotion of a monotheistic English Protestant identity centred on duty to church, country and monarch. (Bentley, 1582, p.5) Puritans (so-called due to their desire to purify the post-1558 Elizabethan Church) frequently portrayed ancient saints and recent Marian martyrs not as supernatural beings, but as ordinary people overcoming their weaknesses and resisting damnable error through abstract notions like the power of prayer. (Burton, 1612, p.2) Lincolnshire minister Foxe, a former Marian exile, drew heavily upon the writings of his martyred contemporaries to equate both Marian persecutors and Elizabethan missionaries with inherently evil emissaries of the Antichrist associated with decadent, pagan Babylon. (Foxe, 1576, p.783) For Foxe and fellow Puritans Ames, Burton and Bentley, this malevolent figure was the Pope, whose agents deceived the late Queen Mary; conspired with foreign enemies like the Spaniards to overthrow Elizabeth; and undid all the gains of the Edwardian reformers by firstly restoring the idolatrous worship of images, and secondly by restricting Scripture to speakers of Latin. (Ames, 1633, p.519) Seeking to retrospectively establish continuity between the reigns of Elizabeth and her father Henry, Foxe subsequently argued that the late Medieval church no longer upheld the ideals of early Catholicism because of its perpetuation of relics. For Puritans eager to impose further Calvinist inspired reforms within the Elizabethan Church, the so-called popish veneration of inanimate objects and embezzlement of money contradicted Christ's teachings that his disciples should serve only God and live austere, penitent lives.

In contrast to the Catholic Church, Elizabethan Anglican and Puritan ministers did not need to take into account centuries of pre-Reformation tradition. (Willett, 1592, p.275) Instead, returning Marian exiles like John Old, Bishop Bale, and young Elizabethan minister Andrew Willett, simply dismissed superfluous rituals and doctrine as evidence of Rome's alleged decadence and corruption: superstitious popish idolatry, the fraudulent trade in relics, and priests' alleged use of celibacy to conceal intemperance and sexual immorality. (Old, 1556, p.21) Subsequently, saints who had quarrelled with their monarch were portrayed as villains: Archbishop Beckett, for example, was branded a "thief and murderer in hell" (Foxe, 1583, p.1053) who earned a violent death in 1170 for spreading lies about Henry II on Satan's behalf. (Bale, 1545, p.52) Additionally, Puritan martyrologists like Foxe were known to portray pre-Reformation Lollards, and even reforming Catholics like Henry VIII himself, as proto-Protestants in an attempt to demonstrate continuity between the reigns of Elizabeth; her brother Edward VI; and their father's efforts to consolidate royal control over the post-1533 English Church. The commitment of early reformist clergymen (including Bishop Hooper) to introducing vernacular Bibles and prayer-books was equated with the Twelve Apostles' empowerment by the Holy Ghost to speak foreign tongues; and their later self-sacrifice on the "Mount of Calvary" (Philpot and Coverdale, 1564, p.247) not only saved sinners, but liberated their own souls from inferior earthly bonds. (Bradford, 1559, p.47) By drawing directly from Scripture, Foxe and his fellow Marian exiles could establish English Protestantism as the uncorrupted successor not only of the early church, but also of ancient Israel, both of which had allegedly been abandoned by God for their decadence, sinfulness and rejection of the truth. (Anon., 1558, p.2)

Martyrs as Israelites.

Closely linked with the previously discussed de-mystification of the saints was the Protestant depiction of Marian martyrs as Israelites, intended to exalt abstract faith and Bible quotations over ritualised image worship, and confirm England's exclusivity as the new Promised Land. Brigden and Simpson proposed that early Protestants were motivated by civic duty to challenge ignorance and idolatry, just as later Puritans voluntarily cleansed the Elizabethan church of lingering superstition through a combination of direct action, and dissemination of propaganda exalting the Queen's superiority over the Pope. (Brigden, 1989, p.189) By implying Catholicism was not an infallible or universal religion due to its decadence, corruption, and restriction of access to the Bible, Elizabethan Puritans could portray the Reformation as the fundamentalist restoration of ancient patriarchal values pre-dating the popish church. As the old mystical cult of saints no longer sufficed as proof of divine favour due to its association with foreign Popery, Anglicans and Puritans allegorically compared not only contemporary martyrs, but also the Tudor monarchy, with Israelite prophets. (Simpson, 2007, p.167) McCulloch deems Foxe's martyrology an Old Testament analogy: Henry, as Moses, led England into a bountiful Promised Land; Edward, as Joshua, completed the job before Israel's backsliding under Mary; and Elizabeth, as "gracious Deborah," (McCulloch, 1999, p.199) restored England's prosperity by supplanting the cult of saints with Biblical analogies. Unlike the Jews allegedly forsaken by God, however, the exiled Anglican elect triumphed over their Babylonian papist captors, and were thus deemed worthy to reclaim the Land of Canaan under Elizabeth's leadership.

After the 1533 schism, Henry VIII portrayed himself as King David: a righteous "prince of justice" (Henry VIII, 1535, p.1) resisting a pagan papist church equated with the terrifying giant warrior Goliath and the barbarian Philistine army. Government propagandists argued that Henry's restoration of the English Church's autonomy stabilised the realm, because the King was the only authority figure capable of preventing corrupt priests from robbing and exploiting the poor. (Cromwell and Bray, 1994, p.177) To avoid allegations of heresy, Henry proclaimed himself a reforming Catholic seeking to supplant foreign popish tyranny with a rational Bible-based form of Christianity focusing upon duty to "one God and one King." (Henry VIII, 1533, p.9) Henry, Lord Chancellor Cromwell and royal printer Swinnerton justified the execution of papists opposed to royal church supremacy by depicting the Pope not as Christ's infallible representative, but the sinful "earthly usurper of God's law" (Henry VIII, 1534, fol.80r) associated with treachery and chaos. (Swinnerton, 1534, p.18) Later Puritans like Adams and Bateman adapted Henrician propaganda to argue that Elizabethan efforts to create an Anglican confessional state (in which church and secular government were under royal control) were allegedly derived from policies formulated in ancient Zion: God's original chosen nation. (Bateman, 1580, p.16) Due to their supposed wickedness, the Jews had been abandoned by God after their conquest by Babylon and later by Rome, but England's return to greatness heralded an end to centuries of captivity and confirmed that God had chosen a new Israel. (Adams, 1619, p.121) Henry Ainsworth, a Puritan involved in a series of debates with his exiled Jesuit brother John, claimed early Protestants were dutiful subjects who shared Henry's desire to create a church independent from Roman Popery, because the latter's episcopal hierarchy enabled wicked men to seize power and exploit the pre-Reformation flock. (Ainsworth, 1620, p.88) Lord Treasurer Burghley and Norfolk Puritan Garey adapted this construct of an exclusive, monotheistic Tudor Zion to

include neighbouring Protestant nations, especially the Calvinist Scots. (Cecil, 1589, fol.52r) With hindsight, Garey could portray James VI as a new David, Jacob or godly "Augustus for these latter times" (Garey, 1618, p.3) destined to succeed his cousin Elizabeth and reunify ancient English Israel with virile Scottish Judah.

Concurrent with McCulloch's theory that the Tudor Reformation was analogous to the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, my analysis of Protestant texts suggests that the Elizabethan and Edwardian periods represented a transition, where the Anglican clergy gradually supplanted Medieval saints' days with sermons describing Israelite prophets spontaneously challenging pagan idolatry. (Foxe, 1583, p.111) However, the two constructs were not incompatible; Marian martyrs could be compared to both saints and prophets not only to discredit Catholic mysticism, but also to exalt Henry and Edward as receptors of divine power. (Thorpe, 1530, p.37) Henrician priest and Bible translator William Tindal or Tyndale utilised abstract notions of faith to highlight early Protestant martyrs' humanity, and focus readers' devotions not on idolatrous images or the physical remains of men, but solely upon God. (Tindal, 1547, p.4) Influenced by these early criticisms of idolatry, the Marian exiles Foxe and Coverdale portrayed Protestant readers in both England and on the continent as an international "elect of God" (Ridley and Coverdale, 1564, p.63) that pre-dated the popish church. (Ridley, 1555, fol.121r) The Old Testament inspired dying speeches of Bishop Ridley and Parson Sanders were interpreted as proof that respectable reformist courtiers were prophets who foresaw the Anglican Church's restoration under Elizabeth as part of God's pre-ordained plan. (Sanders and Coverdale, 1564, p.187) Despite regaining its independence after papist Babylonian captivity, however, the young English Zion remained vulnerable and needed further reforms to become truly Protestant; in particular, the Kingdom's long-term prosperity depended upon the monarch's willingness to listen to the advice of high-ranking clergymen represented as Tudor counterparts to ancient prophets like Samuel. (Foxe, 1583, p.1213) Being already familiar with Catholic doctrine, Bishop Jewel retrospectively argued that early Protestants were able to identify flaws within the church, and implement the reforms necessary to bring about England's transition to the new Israel either under Henry; or during the reign of his youthful but virtuous and learned successor Edward. (Jewel, 1583, p.27)

Elizabethan Anglicans and Puritans depicted the restored English Church as an Ark: a protective object similar to Noah's gigantic ship or the golden casket containing the stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments.(Foxe, 1570, p.4) John Weever, a traditionalist Anglican poet from Lancashire known for his opposition to iconoclasm, deemed martyrdom a "virtue gaining voyage" (Weever, 1601, p.28) where the martyr ignored his apostatising friends' advice, and persecutors' threats and bribes, in order to follow his own conscience and find Christ. Using similar allegories, Puritan ministers Foxe, Bunny, and Oxford scholar Bisse attributed the Anglican Church's ultimate dominance to divine favour, unlike popish idolatry which was seemingly retreating due to the efficacy of Elizabeth's increasingly Protestant church reforms. Before his 1555 burning, London preacher Bradford depicted fellow martyrs as "chief captains of Christ's church" (Bradford, Philpot, Coverdale et al, 1564, p.359) guiding it, like a ship, away from the obstacles of idolatry and superstition and risking their lives to save its passengers: common English laymen. Former Marian exile Bunny retrospectively claimed Bradford's prediction was fulfilled when the Ark of the elect safely traversed the chaotic tempest of persecution and re-entered Canaan like the Twelve Israelite Tribes returning from Egyptian slavery. (Bunny, 1584, p.184) The Anglican Church's

restoration represented a new Abrahamic Covenant, where the English were allegorically circumcised; cleansed of the taint of Marian popish idolatry; and spiritually reborn through their proclamation of allegiance solely to Elizabeth and God. (Bisse, 1581, p.52)

Protestants also used Old Testament analogies to equate the Catholic Church with Babylon and Sodom: decadent, sinful and disobedient cities facing divine retribution for their idolatry, cruelty and promiscuity. (Bale, 1545, p.15) Although the Papacy was once pure and godly, by the 1500s it had become a power-hungry and decadent institution, resulting in divine favour being transferred to the Anglican elect. (Jewel, 1560, p.48) Queen Mary was compared to "ungodly Jezebel:" (Massarius and Robinson, 1846, p.343) a tyrant, idolatress and puppet of her hated husband Philip and the Pope, whose unjust persecutions of the righteous elect undermined Henrician and Edwardian efforts to create an Anglican confessional state. (Anon., 1555, p.3) Seeking to discredit priestly celibacy as corrupting, Puritans retrospectively exaggerated early heretics' anti-Catholicism to establish common ground with the Elizabethan church and demonise Marian bishops as "bloodsuckers," (Foxe, 1570, p.939) whose initial lust for women inevitably resulted in worse depravities like buggery, murder or treason. (Bale, 1543, p.28) Rejecting Catholic claims that commoners were ignorant and disorderly, Foxe, Dean of Exeter Sutcliffe, and younger Jacobean preachers like Burton, claimed that many English laypeople knew the Marian persecutions were unjust but were too terrified to speak out without a martyr's leadership, comparable to the enslaved Biblical contemporaries of Daniel or Moses. (Burton, 1628, p.31) If persecutors felt merciful, early Protestants condemned to burn were provided with a keg of gunpowder, but this frequently misfired, resulting in a slow and agonising death which Foxe equated with the prophet Elias or Elijah's triumphant ascent to heaven in a "fiery chariot."(Foxe, 1563, p.233) Unlike surviving papists, whose terror or despair at their own later arrest implied guilt, Marian Protestants were equated with prophets like Job, whose patience and quiet suffering eventually brought heavenly rewards. (Ainsworth, 1607, p.65) Due to the availability of vernacular print, laymen no longer needed priests to interpret the Bible, weakening papist control over the population and enabling literate men to challenge rituals lacking scriptural proof. (Sutcliffe, 1629, p.34)

Counter to Anglican depictions of England as Israel, Catholics adapted negative Jewish stereotypes to portray contemporary authority figures not as virtuous prophets, but successors to Christ's accuser Caiaphas, or (in the case of Henry VIII) an older, crueller David whose soul was tainted by many murders, adulteries, and other "horrible crimes." (Floyd, 1612, p.237) By merging lingering pre-Reformation suspicion of contemporary Jews with Humanist efforts to verify the rituals of transubstantiation and sacred space with scriptural proof, Marian Bishop Tunstall and later missionary priests could brand Protestants ignorant for relying upon English Bibles rather than the civilised languages of Latin or Greek. (Tunstall and Stokesley, 1560, p.17) Exiled Doctor of Divinity Richard Bristow and Jesuit John Floyd claimed that if Elizabethan Puritan iconoclasts were Israelites, then they were inherently inferior to the Catholic elect for spurning genuine priests and profaning ancient churches. (Bristow, 1580, p.279) Recusant scholar Stapleton and Catholic priest Norris or Newton equated Elizabethan hanging judges with Roman governor Pilate and the "wicked Jews" (Stapleton, 1567, p.81) who demanded Christ's crucifixion, unlike martyred priests who followed the example of Christ's apostles by charitably enlightening backward England on the meaning of true religion. (Norris, 1621, p.40) These post-Marian

Catholics rebuked Puritan Pharisees in full knowledge that such criticisms could result in being drawn on a sledge to Tyburn or Smithfield gallows in London; hanged until half-dead; then disembowelled and cut into quarters. (Arias, 1630, p.169)

Some of the more radical Elizabethan missionaries (especially leading Jesuits and supporters of Philip of Spain's claim to the English throne) reinterpreted Puritan texts to claim the Anglican Church represented pagan Babylon, while Catholicism was the successor to philosophical, enlightened civilisations like Ancient Greece or Rome. (Brierley, Anderton et al., 1608, p.568) Priests feared that the generation of English laypeople raised on Foxe's *Acts and Monument*s would maintain a lingering anti-clericalist mind-set, potentially complicating their reconversion unless such Protestant texts were convincingly debunked. Robert Parsons and John Brierley (possibly a pseudonym used by Jesuit Laurence Anderton) equated Anglican Bible translators with the arrogant builders of the Tower of Babel, needlessly meddling with Scripture by supplanting the universal language of Latin with an inferior, divisive vernacular tongue. (Parsons, 1604, p.100) Additionally, Parsons compared Elizabeth's heresy to Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar's reversion to bestial paganism, contrary to virtuous Gentile Kings like Darius of Persia who protected God's people from spiteful heathens. (Parsons, 1599, p.104) By accusing contemporary Protestants of barbarism, Catholics could draw parallels with the chaotic horde of pagan Goths who ended the Roman Empire; with the Huguenots who rebelled against the French King; and with the German Lutheran mercenaries who defied their commander, Emperor Charles V, by sacking the Papal States in 1527. (D'Avity and Grimstone, 1615, p.401) Cardinal Allen, a Marian priest from Lancashire banished for rejecting Elizabeth's church supremacy, associated Henry's chaotic despoliation of the abbeys with cruel Assyrian invaders pillaging sacred Jerusalem, and the warlike Turks forcibly converting Christians to Islam. (Allen, 1595, p.83) By contrast, the Catholic priesthood represented the legitimate successor to Moses, Abraham, the priestly Levite tribe, and Jebusite King Melchizedek, whose consecration of bread and wine to honour God was deemed proof that a form of "un-bloody and mystical" (Rainolds, 1583, p.63) Catholic Mass pre-dated Israel's establishment. As a member of the monotheistic Canaanite tribe that founded Jerusalem alias Jebus or Salem, exiled priests Rainolds and Harding argued that Melchizedek outranked the nomadic proto-Israelite chieftain Abraham; indeed, the latter's humble homage to the priest-King implied that secular rulers were compelled to obey the "everlasting priesthood" (Harding, 1567, p.14) in religious affairs.

Conclusion

My source-analysis suggests Protestant perceptions of the godly elect, were generally more flexible because, unlike Catholic missionaries, Anglicans and Puritans could adapt, or even ignore, pre-Reformation traditions. Most notably, Anglican bishops like Jewel, and Puritans like Foxe or Burton, sought to depict the English confessional state as possessing older, purer origins than Popery. Eager to instil a sense of pride and duty towards church, monarch and nation, Protestants exploited popular xenophobia and suspicion of excessive ritual to attack international popery as a chaotic, anachronistic and foreign ideology at odds with Anglican order and normality. While not denying that the Catholic Church and post-1533 Church of England were both offshoots of the early church, Puritans claimed English Christianity's spiritual origins lay in ancient Israel; while popery had become corrupt and pagan as a result of its adherence to man-made rituals rather than Bible-based texts. By claiming the

English had been chosen to replace both the Jews who rejected Christ, and decadent Roman Popery, Foxe and his contemporaries could figuratively depict the Marian martyrs as prophets chosen to herald Elizabethan England's transition into a godly confessional state worthy for Christ's anticipated return. However, this did not necessarily translate into admiration of contemporary Jews, who continued to be considered a sinful and inferior group forsaken by God just as the corrupted Papacy was supplanted by the post-schism Anglican Church. Puritan allegorical depictions of early martyrs as outspoken prophets empowered by God to resist backward pagan Babylonian tyranny were intended to reconcile early Protestant clergymen's defiance with their patriarchal duty to safeguard the laity, and uphold laws grounded in Scripture pre-dating Medieval Popery.

Contrary to Foxe's criticisms, however, Catholic doctrine was by no means rigid and unchanging; when facing seemingly new Bible based criticisms, priests re-interpreted Protestant arguments to not only exalt Catholicism as the early church's universal successor, but also to equate Anglicans and Puritans with wicked apostatising Jews who supposedly killed Christ and rejected his divinity. This contrasted with the positive representation of Christian Rome as the guardian of order, civilisation and progress: the implication being that heretics were barbarous and irrational children who stubbornly clung to inferior doctrine and endangered not only their own souls, but also England's long-term stability. By portraying the Elizabethan Catholic mission as a conflict between a corrupted, insular Anglican Israel, and saint-like Jesuit missionaries imitating Christ's disciples correcting Old Testament error, priests could brand Elizabethan government efforts to force conformity to an inferior church unlawful and irrational. Additionally, Catholic martyrologists' self-identification with the early Christians served to reconcile celibate priests' claims to be not only scholars devoted to their books, but also mystics, whose talents were a gift from God; and whose pious, exemplary lives made them ideal receptors for direct divine intercession in the form of prophesy, miracles, and visions.

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